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AN
ADDRESS to the PUBLIC,
SETTING FORTH
THE BENEFIT ACCRUING
To the Community at Large,
BY ENCLOSING THE LANDS
NOW LAYING WASTE IN
Great Britain;
AND
Shewing how easy they might be converted into
SMALL FREEHOLDS,
Which would tend to
LESSEN THE PRICE OF PROVISIONS.

BY
D. C. WEBB.

1795.

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ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC

THE BRITISH MUSEUM

THE NEW MUSEUM

BY DISPOSING THE LANDS

HOW TO BE OBTAINED

OF THE



D. C. WEBB

1707

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To the Public.

THESE few remarks, are humbly offered to the consideration of a generous and candid public; my wish being solely for the benefit of society. Without trespassing upon their attention with a long preface, I have only to request they will judge of the propriety of converting those lands laying waste into small freeholds with impartiality. Should this little work, dedicated to society, fall into the hands of the great, and they be convinced of its utility, it is to be hoped they will use every measure that may be conducive to so desirable an end.

AN.

ADDRESS TO THE PUBLIC,

Ec. Ec. Ec.

YE enervated sons of Britain, rouse from your lethargy! the voice of humanity calls upon you, no longer to let so many poor objects pine in misery and distress, when by one act of the legislature, thousands will bless the wisdom of their governors; commerce will revive, and a once flourishing people from a staggering property emerge to prosperity. Can you any longer deliberate on a thing of such great moment! Nature revolts to see her benefits so neglected: such a waste

waste of land, such desolate tracts, in so small a state. Will an industrious nation, with so many spare hands, be indolent? The argument of those lands not bearing cultivation, is futile and frivolous, easily exploded by experience, which sufficiently elucidates that enclosing land will in a great degree assist vegetation, by preventing the winds from carrying away those fertile juices, which are the chief support of plants; and it is evident it does on such extensive plains. Whatever rises from the earth by exhalation, proceeds till its own natural gravity, or some object detains it. If those dreary spots were parcelled out into freeholds of one hundred acres each, comfortable subsistence would be given to one hundred and thirty thousand families, there being thirteen * millions of acres

* This calculation may not be strictly true, but it is evident that there are immense tracts of land lying waste in this country, which would be needless to attempt to prove; and is sufficient for the intention of this pamphlet, without entering into any argument upon the quantity; but I believe there is more than specified above.

of land lying waste in Great Britain. Those families would rear more provisions than necessary for their own immediate use, consequently the markets would receive a greater supply, there being at present barely sufficient for the consumption of the kingdom. All necessary articles of life would be cheaper, and our commerce encreased, by being able to undersell other nations in those commodities that are exported, the price of labour always depending upon that of provisions. Plenty, would make the labourer live comfortable, without thinking of wild plans of reform. Our government shewing itself so anxious for the welfare of the generality of the community, and not attending to the cabals of individuals, whose private interest it may be to oppose so beneficial a measure, will be firmly established in the hearts of the people, and not totter with the vile machinations of evil and seditious constitution-mongers, who cannot rear a better fabric than the one supported by justice. Those innumerable advantages cannot

well be confuted. Sophistry may talk, but can never undo an argument that is founded on the principles of truth, reason, and the benefit of the community. No doubt some will urge an impossibility of finding sufficient hands for the purpose. Can any one deny there being numerous hands unemployed, which there certainly is throughout the kingdom, although the war has required immense drafts for its service. Have the canals, those public works of utility, ever been delayed by want of labourers? No, they have not. What means of subsistence will be given those men when their employ is over? None better than that of agriculture. However, admitting a want of hands, still there remains a remedy; a part of the battalions now *encamped, to oppose the designs of a watchful and invidious enemy, might be advantageously employed in agriculture to

* At the time this was wrote encampments were formed in several parts of the kingdoms; but at this season of the year they may probably be broke up, and the men removed to barracks, which answers the intention equally the same.

their own benefit, and that of their brethren, without encroaching upon their other services. Increase of employment will soon increase population (the strength and riches of a nation) by making men able to maintain a family they will seek more anxiously after domestic happiness. To bring the utility in a clearer point of view, it may be better to distinguish the advantages of enclosing waste lands under distinct heads.

1st, Agriculture being the most necessary science, as the very existence of society depends upon it; all improvements, or enlargements upon the quantity of land in cultivation, must greatly tend to the advantage of a popular country.

2dly, When a scarcity of provisions prevail (which they certainly must at present by the dearness of them) all measures tending to encrease those requisite articles of life, must advance the happiness and comforts of the people.

3dly, Provisions being cheap our manufacturers will be enabled to afford their goods at such reasonable rates as will not only be an internal benefit, but encrease our commerce by the advantage of underselling other nations in those commodities that are carried to foreign markets. A good trade will always support a respectable and powerful navy, which will keep our possessions abroad, and defend us at home from all attacks of any enemy whatever.

4thly, Employment and comforts for the lower orders of society, which they at present very much want, will prevent their lending ear to the machinations of those men, who under the mask of reform, and led on by dire ambition, would scourge the human race by their ruinous theories. A government founded and acting for the welfare of the people, will always be able to resist their lawless attacks. Increase of population will give power and riches.

5thly, The increase of houses, and the consumption of several other articles, will augment the produce of the revenue, by which means and proper management, a part of our national debt may in time be paid off, which will give firmness and respectability to the English nation.

6thly, The benefit of constant employment will make the people more virtuous, and the dreadful depredations of vice on the human heart, will find some check; idleness being the root of all evil.

7thly, Our prisons will be less required, and those frequent executions which appal human nature, partly be put a stop to by a spirit of industry rising; among us, will greatly prevent those abominable robberies that are continually committed, by finding honest and worthy employment for our rising young men.

8thly, To carry all these beneficial effects into execution, nothing is requisite

but an act of parliament giving power to a committee to grant freehold rights of one hundred acres each, to those who would purchase them, at the small sum of ten pounds, clear of all office fees.

9thly, The sum that would be raised by a measure, big with such utility, would considerably assist the expenditure of the following year, and relieve the people from other burthens which must necessarily be laid upon them, to carry on the public service.

10thly, The right of election must be given to those freeholders, for the county in which they reside, the benefit of which, will clearly appear to those, versed in the theory of government.

11thly, That their may be no check to improvement, those lands ought to be clear from any tythes.

12thly, It would be of more utility to the public, if no person could hold

two or more of those freeholds, and prevent the meddling with the sacred right of property, to lessen the price of provisions, which must be done, if those measures are not adopted.

13thly, Increase of employment will prevent emigration, and keep our manufacturers at home.

What objections can be anticipated in order to be done away, that so useful an act should pass this parliament, when the members may return to their constituents, with the agreeable epithet of having deserved well of their country. The first and most considerable, is the trespassing upon the rights of the poor, for whom those commons have so long been neglected; let them consider the benefit of constant employment, the reduction of the price of provisions, and the small utility it ever was to them, and they will find themselves gainers by the change, it being chiefly calculated for their welfare. It may be said, those

lands will yield no produce immediately, and particularly of provisions; let the right of inheritance be given, the industry of man will instantly turn it to their advantage, and must be clear to men well conversant with agriculture, that provisions, and several useful substances, may be raised upon those lands. There being no reasonable considerations of any weight to oppose the measure, may the wisdom of our legislatures immediately put it into execution.

FINIS,



